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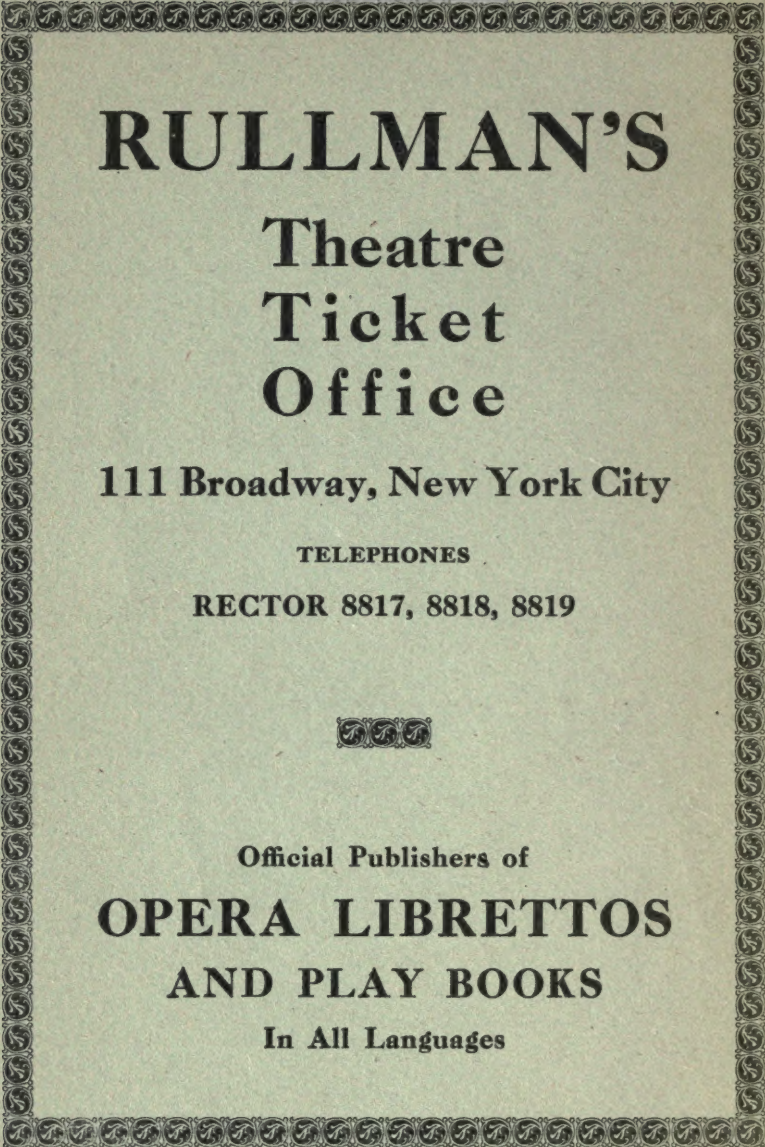
THE ORIGINAL ITALIAN,  
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LIBRETTO WITH A  
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### CLEOPATRA'S NIGHT

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**In All Languages**

## Mr. Hadley and "Cleopatra's Night"

"Cleopatra's Night," which will have its *première* at the Metropolitan Opera House Saturday afternoon, January 31st, will be the tenth work by an American composer to be produced by General Manager Gatti-Casazza. Other American-made operas produced by this management during the past twelve years are: Converse's "Pipe of Desire"; Parkers' "Mona"; Damrosch's "Cyrano"; Herbert's "Madeleine"; De Koven's "The Canterbury Pilgrims"; Cadman's "Shanewis"; Gilbert's "Dance in Place Congo"; Breil's "The Legend", and Hugo's "The Temple Dancer."

Henry K. Hadley is well-known to the American public. A Massachusetts' Yankee, but of a music-loving family, he worked at his art in Boston and Europe, conducting opera at Mayence and later becoming conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. He already has four symphonies to his credit, several overtures, a ballet, a symphonic fantasia, a poetic rhapsody and four operas: "Safie," "Azora," "The Atonement of Pan" and "Bianca," the latter produced at the Park Theatre last season. "Cleopatra's Night," Mr. Hadley's latest work, was accepted by Mr. Gatti-Casazza last winter. Asked to tell something about its birth, Mr. Hadley said:

"How did I happen to write this opera? While a student in Vienna I chanced upon Theophile Gautier's fascinating short story, "Une Nuit de Cléopâtre," and was much impressed by his descriptions. But it was only after I went to Egypt, saw the landscape and vivid coloring that I determined to write something with this wonderfully romantic and mysterious country as its background. Then I recalled this story, and the possibilities which it offered—not only as an imaginative flight, but as a practical piece for the theatre.

"The Orient has always had a peculiar charm for me. I visited all the *Café chantants* and native theatres in Cairo, determined to take down some material, but found it all so crude and primitive and atrociously out of time that I fled into the country to seek inspiration from nature. For several weeks

I lived in the outskirts of a little village on the Suez Canal called Ishmalia on the border of a tiny lake, camping with another dreamer who was preparing a work on etymology.

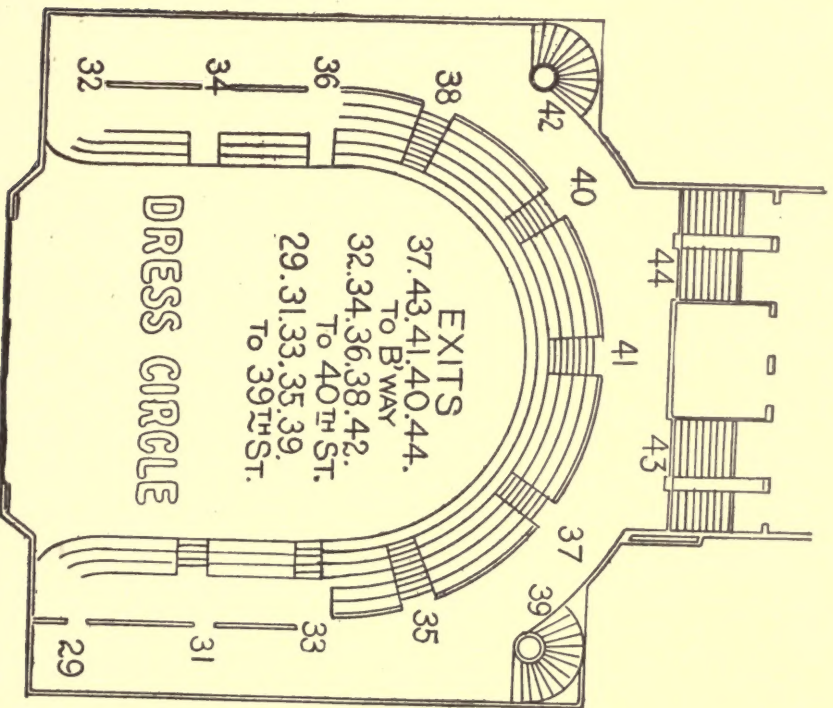
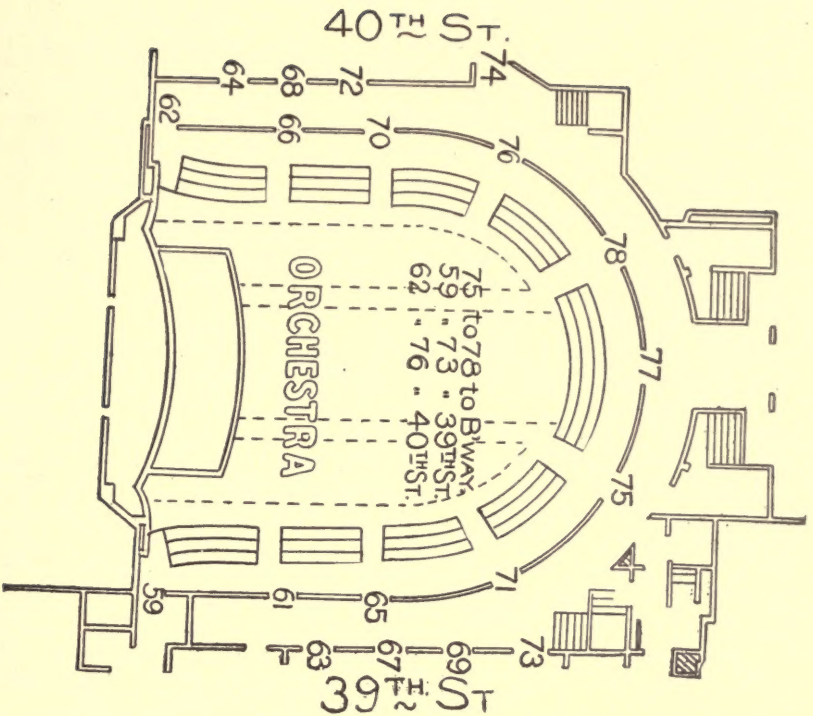
"The glories of the sunsets filled us with awe and wonder, and the silence spoke volumes concerning the past. In this secluded garden of dreams I planned an Oriental Suite for orchestra on original themes but the spell of 'Cleopatra' was over me. I procured another copy of Gautier's story in Cairo and again revelled in his extravagant word-pictures. Returning to Paris I made my first sketches of thematic material, and now after the lapse of several years I have remoulded these themes to Mrs. Pollock's attractive libretto, and 'One of Cleopatra's Nights' has become a short opera.

"During the summer of 1918 I became so obsessed with the work that I wrote incessantly until I had finished the sketches. The score is more or less freely conceived and naturally written in the modern idiom. I have attempted in my orchestral coloring to portray the strange, mad love of Meiamoun for his Queen. This is particularly emphasized by a short phrase in the clarinet, a combination of two curious scales which recurs throughout the work.

"Since my opera was accepted at the Metropolitan I have found the interest and enthusiasm of Madame Frances Alda, who will sing the main rôle, of the greatest inspiration in finishing my orchestration. Mr. Norman Bel Geddes has taken keen interest in preparing most gorgeous scenic decorations. The towering columns and forty-foot door are quite in keeping with the grandeur of Egyptian architecture. Maestro Gennaro Papi has generously co-operated with me in every detail of the music, while Mr. Richard Ordynski's aid as Stage Director has been invaluable.

"The work occupies not more than one hour and a half and will be presented in two acts with an orchestral intermezzo containing the love song played by the flute."

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**CLEOPATRA'S NIGHT**

*(Une Nuit de Cléopâtre)*



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LIBRETTO

Cleopatra's Night

(UNE NUIT DE CLÉOPÂTRE)

OPERA  
IN TWO ACTS

MUSIC BY  
HENRY HADLEY

*Op. 90*

TEXT BY  
ALICE LEAL POLLOCK

*(Based on a story by Théophile Gautier)*

FRENCH VERSION BY  
GRACE HALL

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# CLEOPATRA'S NIGHT

OPERA IN TWO ACTS

BOOK BY ALICE LEAL POLLOCK

(BASED ON THE STORY "UNE NUIT DE CLÉOPÂTRE" BY THÉOPHILE GAUTIER)  
(IN ENGLISH)

MUSIC BY HENRY HADLEY

CLEOPATRA . . . . .	FRANCES ALDA
MEIAMOUN . . . . .	MORGAN KINGSTON
MARDION . . . . .	JEANNE GORDON
IRAS . . . . .	MARIE TIFFANY
THE EUNUCH . . . . .	MILLO PICCO
A ROMAN OFFICER . . . . .	LOUIS D'ANGELO
THE VOICE OF MARK ANTONY . . . . .	VINCENZO RESCHIGLIAN

SLAVES, EUNUCHS, ROWERS, GUESTS, GREEK GIRLS, DESERT GIRLS, JUGGLERS,  
MUSICIANS, MARK ANTONY'S HERALD AND RETINUE.

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## ARGUMENT

It is a period of dry and oppressive midsummer heat. Cleopatra's favorite attendant, Mardion, and one of her female slaves, Iras, are waiting at the baths near the summer palace for the return of the Queen from a festival on the Nile. Their talk is of the Queen's amours, and of Mardion's unrequited passion for young Meïamoun, a brave and chaste hunter. A eunuch interrupts them to announce the immediate arrival of Cleopatra for her bath, the heat of the day having made her cut short the festivities. Cleopatra magnificently appareled, makes her appearance in a gorgeous barge propelled by fifty rowers, and surrounded by a glittering retinue. While she laments the loneliness of queens, a whistling sound is heard and a quivering arrow buries its point near her. Almost swooning with terror, she stifles a scream while Mardion rushes forward and picks up the arrow, which is wound about with a piece of papyrus. The Queen fears it is the attempt of an assassin, but no; the papyrus bears the words, "I love you." While she muses upon this incident, and her women are disrobing her for the bath, the head of a man swimming is seen in the distance, and just as Cleopatra prepares to step into the pool she utters a piercing scream, for Meïamoun staggers up gasping and glistening from the water. In the ensuing babble, while the eunuchs spring forward with lances aimed, Mardion places the papyrus again insinuatingly in Cleopatra's hand. She orders the man brought to her. He confesses that it was he who sent the arrow with its message, prompted by his all absorbing love and passion for her beauty. Influenced by his ardor, her mood changes gradually from imperious anger, and yielding to her own awakening passion, she offers him a single night of royal splendor and of love's transports if he will die at sunrise. Mardion horrified, begs him to kill himself before becoming the Queen's plaything, but he refuses; and Mardion herself, seizing a dagger, plunges it into her own heart. The Queen orders her lifeless body thrown to the crocodiles; and to the sound of trumpets and shouts of courtiers, she and Meïamoun seat themselves in the barge and glide toward the palace, while twilight deepens over the scene.

A gorgeous banquet is prepared on the terraces of the palace; but while the guests wait, the Queen tarries long with Meïamoun. Finally she appears, jewelled and robed with dazzling brilliance, while her lover of a

night is arrayed like a young king. She seats herself on the throne, bidding Meřamoun take his place beside her; and Greek girls enter and perform a dance, followed by a wild band of desert maidens, whose dance grows faster and more furious. Their voluptuous gestures and attitudes of seductiveness excite the guests to unlicensed passion, and the scene becomes a debauch, when the men snatch at the dancing girls and seize them bodily to carry them screaming and laughing to hidden parts of the garden. Finally all disappear, leaving Cleopatra and Meřamoun alone. They are absorbed in the transports of their love, but the night is waning and Cleopatra urges him to accompany her to a hidden white temple in the garden where they can be alone. He sorrowfully points to the east, where the first faint glow of the coming day is apparent.

Wildly she insists that it shall remain night for a month, but her royal power is impotent here, and with the actual appearance of the dawn a distiller of poisons enters, bearing a vase containing a most deadly drug. This he offers to Meřamoun who prepares to drink it, but first he begs of Cleopatra that after his spirit has left its earthly shell she will hold his body to her heart and kiss his lifeless lips. She promises. He drinks the poison and falls dead at her feet, just as Iras rushes in to announce the immediate arrival of Mark Antony. Slaves cover Meřamoun's body with silken cloths. Antony's officers approach the Queen and tell her that Antony has ridden all night in order that he might greet her with the sun. Bidding them take word to Antony that she will greet him at once, she bids them withdraw; and alone with the body of her lover she kneels beside him and kisses his lips tenderly, while she pours forth her soul in a lament of passionate longing and sorrow. The voice of Mark Antony calls to her from without, and reluctantly she raises herself, and with a parting kiss on Meřamoun's lips she goes slowly up the stairs of the palace, while from the distance one hears the solemn chant of priests.

## CHARACTERS

CLEOPATRA, Queen of Egypt	<i>Dramatic Soprano</i>
MEÏAMOUN, A Young Egyptian	<i>Tenor</i>
MARK ANTONY	<i>Baritone</i>
MARDION, Favored Maid to the Queen	<i>Mezzo Soprano</i>
DIOMEDES, Chief of Cleopatra's rowers	
THE DISTILLER OF POISONS	
IRAS, A Maiden	<i>Mezzo Soprano</i>
A EUNUCH	<i>Baritone</i>
ANTONY'S CHIEF OFFICER	<i>Baritone</i>
A GUEST	<i>Tenor</i>
A HUNGRY GUEST	<i>Bass</i>
A FEMALE GUEST	<i>Mezzo Soprano</i>

### Also

Cleopatra's slaves, Eunuchs, Female attendants, Rowers, Banquet guests, Greek girls, Desert girls, Hump-backed dwarfs, Magicians, Musicians, Mark Antony's Herald and his attending Retinue.

ACT I. The baths of Cleopatra at the foot of her Summer Palace at sunset.

ACT II. The Terraces of the Palace before Sunrise.

## PERSONAGES

CLÉOPÂTRE, Reine d'Egypte	<i>Soprano</i>
MEIAMOUN, un jeune Egyptien	<i>Ténor</i>
MARC ANTOINE	<i>Bariton</i>
MARDION, Esclave favorite de Cléopâtre	<i>Mezzo Soprano</i>
DIOMÈDE, Chef des rameurs de Cléopâtre	
L'ESCLAVE PORTANT LA COUPE DE POISON	
IRAS, une jeune esclave	<i>Mezzo Soprano</i>
UN EUNUQUE	<i>Bariton</i>
CHEF DES OFFICIERS DE MARC ANTOINE	<i>Bariton</i>
PREMIER CONVIVE	<i>Ténor</i>
DEUXIÈME CONVIVE	<i>Bariton</i>
UNE INVITÉE	<i>Mezzo Soprano</i>

Eunuques, Rameurs, Convives, Danseuses, Nains Bossus, Hérautes d'armes de Marc Antoine

ACTE PREMIER: Les Bains de Cléopâtre, au pied du Palais d'Eté.  
Coucher de Soleil.

ACTE DEUXIÈME: Les Terrasses du Palais, avant l'Aurore.

# CLEOPATRA'S NIGHT

(UNE NUIT DE CLÉOPÂTRE)

## ACT I

*The bath of Cleopatra, sunk in the midst of a spacious garden, is filled with mimosas, aloes, carob-trees, citron and Persian apple trees. The Nile flows silently sinister in the background. Vast terraces of verdant vegetation climb upon gigantic stairways of rose colored granite which lead to the Palace. Vases of Pentelic marble bloom at either side of the steps with huge lily flowers.*

*Exquisite feminine figures wearing earrings and necklaces whose bodies terminate in fish tails, griffen wings or lion haunches, extend their limbs upon the flower-strewn ways. A double row of these "delightful monsters" leads to the bath which occupies the left center.*

*The Bath itself is a huge marble basin entered by porphyry stairways on either side. The transparent depths of the water reveal the bottom strewn with gold dust. On the brink figures of women terminating as pedestals spirt slender jets of perfume from their breasts into the bath. On their heads they support an entablature in bas relief furnished with bronze rings to which the silken cords of a velarium are attached. The implacable blue of the Egyptian sky encases the whole scene as in a tent.*

*With the rise of the curtain the stage is empty. From across the Nile drifts the chant of some Egyptians imploring the Unseen for rain.*

## ACTE PREMIER

*Les Bains de Cléopâtre, bâtis dans de vastes jardins remplis de mimosas, d'aloès, de caroubiers, de citronniers, et de pommes persiques.*

*Le Nil, silencieux et sinistre, coule au bas des bains. D'immenses terrasses, soutenant des massifs de verdure font monter les fleurs jusqu'au palais par de gigantesques escaliers de granit rose. Des vases de marbre pentélique s'épanouissent comme de grands lis au bord de chaque rampe.*

*De charmantes formes de femme, portant des boucles d'oreille et des colliers, se bifurquant en queue de poisson, se déployant en aile de griffon, s'arrondissant en croupe de lionne, sont couchées mollement sur le gazon tout piqué de fleurs. Une double rangée de ces délicieux monstres borde l'allée qui conduit au bain, situé au centre gauche de la scène.*

*Le bain même est un vaste bassin avec quatre escaliers de porphyre de chaque côté. A travers la transparence de l'eau on voit le fond sablé de poudre d'or. Au bord, des femmes terminées en gaine comme des cariatides font jaillir de leurs mamelles un filet d'eau parfumée qui retombe dans le bassin. Elles portent sur leur tête un entablement orné en bas-relief, et muni d'anneaux de bronze pour attacher les cordes de soie du velarium.*

*L'implacable azur du ciel d'Egypte couvre la scène entière comme d'une tente.*

*Au lever du rideau la scène se trouve vide.*

*Au delà du Nil le disque rouge et farouche du soleil plonge lentement sous l'horizon. On entend les voix des Egyptiens adressant leur prière au soleil couchant.*

*Une barque, puis une autre, passent silencieusement.*

EGYPTIANS (*chanting from the distance across the Nile:*)

O Nutar, Nutar am tu heret,—Send us the rain!  
Thou who causeth all growth to fulfill desire —  
Grant us our prayer!

(MARDION and IRAS enter from the Palace)

IRAS

Let us wait here for the Queen's summons.  
Soon the fury of this heat will have been spent. (*Irás flits about among the trees caressing them.*)

Poor parched carob-tree, little mimosa, all you wearied aloes, citron and Persian apple trees, I bring you news — soon, soon the purple bowl of night shall drench you with its nectar. See! (*pointing to the sun*)

MARDION (*mockingly*)

O Sun, red hot as a buckler fallen from the furnace of Vulcan! Do you at last consent to leave us for a few scant hours? I thank you. (*with a mock obeisance*)

IRAS

Do you not fear, Mardion, so to mock the Sun-God?

MARDION

I fear to mock no one but myself, could I but find *that* courage — then (*clutching her heart in a frenzy of pain*) would I tear out of my heart's heart this wild-beast's pain which it seems only my life's blood will satiate. (*She sinks upon a stone seat*)

IRAS (*stroking her head*)

How pale you are — paler than moon flowers bathed in star's light.

MARDION

How should I not be?

IRAS

In a world full of men as this garden of leaves — never would I be as you are.

(*Au loin les Egyptiens chantent sur la rive opposée du Nil.*)

O Nutar, Nutar, amtu heret, donne la pluie!  
Toi dont vient tout désir, tout apaisement,  
écoute-nous!

(MARDION et IRAS sortent du palais)

IRAS (à MARDION)

Attendons là, le soleil baisse: La fureur de son regard va s'éteindre. (*IRAS court parmi les arbres et les caresse*)

Ah! pauvres caroubiers, mes petits mimosas, tous desséchés! mais toi, mon beau pommier persique, console-toi, le soir de son nectar divin abreuve et soulage. Vois! (*indiquant le soleil couchant*)

MARDION

Soleil! bouclier ardent tombé de la fournaise du dieu Vulcain, dis, consens-tu enfin à détourner tes yeux de nous? (*elle fait une révérence moqueuse*) Merci, Seigneur!

IRAS

Ne crains-tu pas, Mardion, son courroux céleste?

MARDION (*avec audace*)

Mardion ne craint nul autre qu'elle! Aurai-je le courage, (*pressant sa main sur son coeur angoissé.*) N'arracherai-je pas de mon coeur cette angoisse fauve, que rien n'assouvira plus que mon trépas. (*Elle se laisse choir sur un banc de pierre.*)

IRAS (*caressant les cheveux de MARDION*)

Que tu es pâle, comme la lune à l'aurore.

MARDION

Comment ne pas l'être?

IRAS

En un monde plein d'hommes comme un jardin de fleurs je ne voudrais être toi.



MARDION

In all this world of men, there is but one *man*.

IRAS

Tell me his name. You gave your promise.

MARDION

He is called Meïamoun — Meïamoun — the strong, the bravely beautiful!

IRAS

Now know I less than ever. Where may one behold this wondrous being?

MARDION

That may few do. Long month on month hunts he the lion in the ocean of sands. Only the perilous — the unreached draws him! But no *woman* — if ever I could think that *any woman* — No — No — (*she is overcome by her emotion*).

(*A Eunuch enters from a small boat*).

THE EUNUCH

The Queen returns from the Panegyris.

IRAS

Returns — so soon?

THE EUNUCH

Her Cangia follows me. The swooning heat caused her to cut short the celebration. She bathes ere the sun depart. She would experience the new perfume from Arabia. See that all is well prepared — naught forgot! Cleopatra's moods today are myriad as the sands.

MARDION

And just as little to be built upon.

IRAS

Ouf — 'tis plain to see our Queen has tested no new poison for a whole long month.

MARDION

Nor in all that time bewildered any man with her caresses. The doom of someone now draws very near.

MARDION

En tout ce monde d'hommes il n'est qu'un homme.

IRAS

Dis-moi son nom, j'ai ta promesse.

MARDION

On le nomme Meïamoun, Meïamoun, le fort, de beauté pareil aux dieux.

IRAS

Pourtant tu ne dis rien où donc peut-on voir pareil prodige?

MARDION

Qui sait, hélas! Des mois entiers il chasse dans le vaste désert. Le périlleux l'attire, l'impossible l'appelle, nulle femme. Si je croyais jamais qu'une femme — Non! Non! (*accablée de son émotion*)

(*Un Eunuche débarque d'une nacelle*)

L'EUNUQUE

La Reine revient de la Panagérie.

IRAS

Revient si tot?

L'EUNUQUE

Sa cange approche et cette chaleur impitoyable la ramène. C'est l'heure du bain royal. Appretez les parfums de l'Arabie. Faites bien tout préparer, n'oubliez. Ses caprices, aujourd'hui sont plus nombreux que les sables.

MARDION

Aussi, bien fol qui s'y fierait!

IRAS

Ah! cela se voit que notre Reine n'a fait tuer personne depuis un long mois.

MARDION

Je sens l'approche du fatal destin

## THE EUNUCH

Luminous does she seem, a breathing flame  
from her strange abstinence.

IRAS (*laughing in derision*)

What sense have *you* of such things.

## THE EUNUCH

Enough to feel the Gods themselves might  
envy her next love!

(*He goes back — searches the Nile with his eyes*)

## MARDION

Do not mock him, Iras, would I were as he—  
insensible (*bowing her head on her arms*).

## THE EUNUCH

The Cangia is not far distant — I warn you  
delay no longer.

MARDION (*rising languidly*)

You said the new perfume from Arabia? Iras,  
summon the attendants.

(*Exit Iras*)

(*Mardion claps her hands two or three times.  
From all sides appear Eunuchs with lances  
and young slave girls.*)

MARDION (*to the Eunuchs*)

Stand on guard — Queen Cleopatra comes to  
bathe even now.

(*To the girls*) Haste your preparations.

(*Some of the girls strew flowers on the rim of  
the bath, others bring garments for the  
bath — some Eunuchs start the fountains —  
the girls playfully catch the spray from the  
breasts of the caryatides and throw it on the  
Eunuchs who stand immobile.*)

MARDION (*clapping her hands*)

To your places. Cleopatra is here.

(*The Cangia of Cleopatra glides into view  
propelled like velvet by its fifty rowers. The  
Cangia is long and narrow, elevated at both  
ends into the form of a new moon. The  
prow is armed by a ram's head surmounted  
by a golden globe, denoting royalty aboard.*)

## L'EUNUQUE

Dans ces jours Cléopâtre est une flamme  
palpitante.

IRAS (*d'un rire dérisoire*)

Tu t'y connais donc, toi? Ha, ha, ha!

## L'EUNUQUE

Je sais que les dieux eux mêmes seraient jaloux  
de son amour. (*Il monte vers le fond de la  
scène parcourant des yeux le Nil.*)

## MARDION

Ne te moque pas: je l'envie, moi, je souffre  
tant! (*elle incline la tête sur ses bras*)

## L'EUNUQUE

La cange royale approche,  
Ne vous attardez plus.

(*MARDION frappe les mains pour appeler les  
esclaves. De tous côtés les eunuques ac-  
courent, la lance à la main. Entrent  
aussi les jeunes esclaves.*)

MARDION (*aux Eunuchs*)

Arretez! La Reine Cléopâtre se rend au bain.  
(*aux Esclaves*) Veillez que tout s'apprête.

(*Quelques unes des esclaves parsèment de fleurs le  
bord du bassin, d'autres apportent des  
vêtements pour la baine. Des Eunuchs font  
jouer les fontaines. Les filles en badinant  
attrappent de leurs mains la rosée d'argent  
qui tombe des seins des cariatides, et en  
éclaboussent les Eunuchs immobiles.*)

(*MARDION frappe des mains et fait signe aux  
esclaves de se préparer a recevoir la Reine.  
La Cange de CLÉOPÂTRE apparit avec la  
rapidité veloutée que peuvent lui donner  
cinqante rameurs. Au milieu de la barque  
s'élève la tente d'honneur, vivement coloriée  
et dorée. CLÉOPÂTRE est étendue sur une  
couche à pieds de griffon.*)

To the center rises a tent of honor highly colored and gilded. Two chambers decorated with hieroglyphics occupy the horns of the crescent. The farther one has a superstructure which serves as pilot house.

The pilot, a swarthy Egyptian, stands here manipulating two immense carved oars adjusted upon decorated stakes. In a tent of honor is a little bed supported upon griffens' feet—reached by a stool with four steps. A semi-circular pillar of cedar wood fits the nape of Cleopatra's neck as she reclines languorously.

A slave stands beside her waving a large fan of ibis feathers. A very young slave girl moistens the little reed blinds with scented water.

Cleopatra wears a golden helmet and many multi-colored heavy jewels in contrast to a robe of vapory revealing whiteness.)

CLEOPATRA (who has been lying still, cries out)  
I swoon — I stifle — the God of Fire himself could not live in this air!

(Mardion claps her hands — a black slave appears balancing a tray laden with cups and slices of luscious melon — he pours a draught from the vase.)

MARDION

Sip of this —

CLEOPATRA (barely touches her lips to the goblet, pushes it away)

My veins seem filled with molten quicksilver. My largest pearl for one drop of rain! But from the inflamed pupil of that implacable expanse no tear will fall. O the desolation of this land! Never a cloud, never a shadow — ever and always the terrible red eye of that sun—searching me out!

MARDION

Yet once again and soon shall his brazen face be dimmed by his silvered sister Night.

(Une esclave debout près d'elle balance un grand éventail de plume d'ibis. Une jeune esclave arrose d'une pluie d'eau de senteur les petites jalousies de roseaux.)

(CLÉOPÂTRE est coiffé d'un casque d'or, elle est étincelante de pierreries massives et bariolées, qui contrastent avec la blanche vapeur de sa robe.)

CLÉOPÂTRE (qui est restée immobile, s'écrie)  
Hélas! j'étouffe! Le dieu du feu lui même périrait dans cet air!

(MARDION frappe des mains. Un esclave éthiopien entre portant un plateau chargé de tasses. Il en remplit une d'une amphore.)

MARDION (offrant le breuvage)

Buvez ceci.

(CLÉOPÂTRE touche à peine la coupe du bout des lèvres et la repousse.)

CLÉOPÂTRE

Du plomb fondu coule en mes veines. Je donnerais mes perles pour de la pluie! Des jeux des dieux impitoyables nulle larme ne tombera. Oh, la tristesse morne de ce ciel! Point de fraîcheur, pas de nuages! Ce soleil rouge et sanglant comme un oeil de Cyclope qui me regarde!

MARDION

Cet oeil farouch et fier deviendra plus calme sous les caresses de la nuit.

## CLEOPATRA

The night will bring no surcease—only thoughts which turn my flesh to stone with terror—The Mummies, Mardion—those bandage-swathed myriads—layers on layers of them—forty feet deep! What do they whisper to each other as they lie face to face through the long night; what is their secret? Oh, if the crawling grave-worm, could be made to speak! What fate unmerited — to be the ill-starred Queen of Mummies!

## IRAS

Are you not our Queen too — all we who respond as the quivering harp to life's lightest touch.

CLEOPATRA (*disregarding*)

Even were I loved — but I am not — I am not.

## MARDION

How not, O Queen, when every speeding glance of yours leaves in its wake a shattered heart?

## CLEOPATRA

How should a Queen know whether she be loved or no? Were I to descend from my throne might I not fall short of the success of the first courtesan from Athens? (*She rises, stretches her arms in supplication*).

O Gods, give me proof — that I am loved, because I am my woman's self! Give me some poignant unexpected, some strangely sweet adventure. Give me — something radiantly rarely different — everything known is staled and unsupportable! Gods, Gods, do not deny me — something to enkindle a fresh spark of life in my heart, atrophied as this land. Gods, Gods, do not deny!

(*Cleopatra's arms are still extended in the exaltation of invocation, when a curious whistling sound is heard — and a quivering arrow buries its point near her. CLEOPATRA swooning with terror stifles a scream and sinks back on the couch*).

## CLÉOPÂTRE

Non, rien ne me console, la peur me prend, et les terreurs me glacent. Les ombres! Mardion! ces spectres sinistres! C'est une ville de morts. Là, sous la pierre que disent-ils dans le tombeau depuis mille ans, face à face dans la nuit? Qui peut le dire? Ah, le ver du sépulchre devrait parler! C'est un destin que je ne mérite point, être Reine des ombres!

## IRAS

N'êtes-vous pas, O Reine, la divinité des peuples entiers prosternés devant vous?

CLÉOPÂTRE (*dédaignant d'écouter*)

Ah, si l'on m'aimait! mais nul ne m'aime!

## MARDION

O Reine! Chaque doux regard de vos yeux perce un coeur comme une flèche.

## CLÉOPÂTRE

Comment la Reine saurait-elle qu'on l'aime? (CLÉOPÂTRE étend les bras d'un geste exalté) O dieux, accordez-moi une vie nouvelle d'amour, de joie, de rêves, d'aventures imprévues. Dieux! dieux! Dans ma solitude envoyez un songe, un songe enivrant qui charme mon coeur. Dieux! dieux! veuillez m'entendre!

(*Les bras de CLÉOPÂTRE sont encore étendus en un geste d'invocation, quand un sifflement se fait entendre et une flèche vient se planter en tremblant près d'elle. CLÉOPÂTRE, presque défaillante retient un cri, et se laisse rétomber sur la couche.*)

(MARDION *rushes forward, picks up the arrow which is wound round with a piece of papyrus.*)

CLEOPATRA

Even unto my utmost privacy do these assassins penetrate — Someone shall pay tenfold for every suffocating heart-beat this outrage causes me.

MARDION (*who has looked at the papyrus and quickly crushes it to her*)

Let your fears abate, O Queen — this was not sped by an assassin.

CLEOPATRA

By whom then? (MARDION *mutely shakes her head*). What hold you to your heart?

MARDION

Nothing!

CLEOPATRA

From nothing much may come. Give it to me — I command! (MARDION *gives her the papyrus. She reads in her siren's voice*) "I love you" (*She repeats softly*) "I love you," "nothing?" Ye immortal Gods! Nothing! The three most magical words in all the universe! "I love you." (*She steps her bare feet into sandals, throws a "Byssus" over her shoulders*). From which direction sped this? (MARDION *is silent, brooding*).

IRAS

From the Nile, O Queen.

CLEOPATRA (*rushing to MARDION who stands gazing moodily out over the water*).

Iras speaks true — See — far over there — a man propels a frail boat! He crosses that path—of light—he—(*wailing*) I cannot see him more — Quick, Mardion—quick, summon Diomedes, he is my fastest rower.

(MARDION *s'élançe pour ramasser la flèche dont le bois est entouré d'un rouleau de papyrus*).

CLÉOPÂTRE (*courroucée*)

Ah, on veut donc ma vie? Saisissez le traître, pour cet outrage à l'instant même qu'il paie de sa mort.

(MARDION *déroule de la flèche le papyrus, le lit, et le serre contre son coeur*.)

Votre crainte est vaine, O Reine, cette flèche n'est d'aucun traître.

CLÉOPÂTRE

De qui donc? (MARDION *secoue la tête en silence*) Dans ta main que tiens-tu?

MARDION

Rien —

CLÉOPÂTRE

D'un rien tout peut venir, Donne, donne! Je commande! (MARDION *lui donne le papyrus. Lisant de sa voix de sirène*) "Je t'aime!" Dieux immortels! "Rien!" "Je t'aime!" Ce sont bien là les mots les plus puissants au monde! Merci, dieux! (CLÉOPÂTRE *appelle MARDION afin de lui montrer le papyrus*).

Mardion, Mardion! "Je t'aime!"

(MARDION *reste muette*)

De quel côté vint la flèche?

IRAS

Du côté du Nil.

CLÉOPÂTRE (*s'élançant vers MARDION qui reste les yeux mornes fixés au lointain sur l'eau*.)

Elle dit vrai. Vois-tu làbas la tête d'un homme qui nage passant dans la clarté. On ne peut plus le voir. Hâtez-vous! De mes rameurs envoyez le plus rapide.

(Entre DIOMÈDE)

## MARDION

He is here. (DIOMEDES stands ready, huge and shining black).

## CLEOPATRA

Diomedes — a man is out there — I saw him but a moment since. Bring him to me — he battles alone against the river's swiftest current — your task is easy — bring him to me swiftly — and alive. *Alive*, or your own life answers.

(DIOMEDES bows low and enters a boat, the swishing sound of the oars is heard)

(CLEOPATRA, looking at the papyrus)

Splendid audacity — to pierce my heart with one swift dart. "I love you—I love you!" This is the message my whole being stood quivering to receive. Gods, gods, I thank you! From no sear mummy's heart came these words — potent to transmute the dross of this existence into treasure unappraisable. "I love you" — but three little words yet would I not barter them for tunics of purple thrice dyed and freighted with pearls, nor for flawless mirrors of molten steel, nor yet for chariots of silver starred with sapphires. Yes — even were the very Cestus of Venus offered me instead, I should say, No — No!

"I love you," what genius invisible could so mysteriously have divined my innermost hunger?

Gods, let me behold him — I desire but to behold this man!

Loose my hair. (They loosen her hair — it falls in a dark cloud to her feet, shielding her almost as a cloak.)

Crown me but with blossoms of lotus. Tonight let me be less than queen, yet more woman than all others, because a brave man has dared to say, "I love you."

(She is crowned with lotus blossoms).

(Her hair about her, she stands revealed in her last gossamer tunic, confined at the shoulder by a single jeweled clasp. She descends the steps of the bath with four slave girls who shield her from the stolid gaze of the eunuchs, with uplifted gauzes of turquoise banded with gold.)

## MARDION

Le voici.

## CLÉOPÂTRE

Qu'on aille à la poursuite de l'inconnu. Qu'on le ramène, vivant, vivant, si non, de ta mort même sois certain! (DIOMÈDE s'incline profondément et entre dans sa barque. Les esclaves du bain commencent à dévêtir CLÉOPÂTRE, qui, préoccupée du papyrus ne fait nulle attention à elles. L'on entend le bruit des rames dans l'eau)

CLÉOPÂTRE (lisant de nouveau)

"Je t'aime!" Splendide audace, blesser mon coeur d'un trait soudain! "Je t'aime, je t'aime." C'est le message que, frémissant, tout mon être attendait. Dieux tout puissants, je vous remercie, ces trois mots de vive flamme, viennent d'un coeur qui lut dans mon âme le secret de mon ardent désir. "Je t'aime!" Mots si caressants, ouvrant tout un monde de douce magie et que je n'échangerais pas pour toutes les richesses du dieu Plutus. Si Jupiter m'offrait le trône de l'Olympe, Aphrodite même m'offrait son ceste, hautaine et fière je dirais non! Non! "Je t'aime, je t'aime." Rayons ineffables illuminant la nuit de ma sombre destinée! Dieux tout puissants, cet homme qui m'aime, qu'il soit à moi!

(Une esclave dénoue les cheveux de CLÉOPÂTRE. Ils se répandent en une cascade noire jusqu'à ses pieds, la recouvrant comme d'un manteau.)

Mardion, ce soir couronnez-moi de fleurs de lotus, que je sois moins Reine et plus femme que toute autre. Un homme, un brave osa me dire, "Je t'aime."

(On la couronne de fleurs de lotus. Entourée de ses cheveux dénoués, et parée d'une seule tunique diaphane retenue à l'épaule par une agrafe incrustée de pierres précieuses, elle descend les marches du bassin accompagnée de quatre esclaves, qui la mettent à l'abri du regard impassible des eunuques en élevant au devant d'elle des écharpes en tissu turquoise bordé d'or.)

CLEOPATRA (*giving her the papyrus*)

Guard well this treasure for me, Mardion.  
(*putting a foot into the water draws it back quickly*)

How cold the water! (*the clasp is unfastened on one shoulder — the filmy garment starts to slip. Cleopatra utters a piercing scream and wraps herself in the gauzes held by the girls, as a man staggers up gasping and glistening through the bath. He is young. The polished smoothness of his tawny orange skin covers sinews of steel. His blue black hair is flung from a brow serene as marble. His nostrils quiver like some lithe war horse's on the eve of battle.*)

Babel ensues. The Eunuchs leap forward, lances aimed, prepared stolidly to kill. MARDION insinuatingly places the papyrus in CLEOPATRA'S hand.)

CLEOPATRA (*glances at it — commands imperiously*)

Hold! Bring him before me—then do your will.  
(*The Eunuchs cast MEIAMOUN at her feet — he does not cringe in fear — he might be taken for a bronze statue in the exalted attitude of supplication to his chosen goddess.*)

CLEOPATRA

Who are you? Answer me! (*he does not answer*)  
Why do I ask? Only another assassin bribed by Rome.

(MEIAMOUN *mutely shakes his head.*)

CLEOPATRA (*imperiously*)

Know you 'tis death to enter here?  
By Oms, the dog of Hell—I envy you your darling. What evil intent propelled you to this sacred ground? What was your motive? Tell me, or never more be heard.

CLÉOPÂTRE (*trempe dans l'eau son pied*)

Oh! que l'eau est froide!

(*Elle pousse un cri aigu et s'enveloppe dans les écharpes de gaze soutenues par les esclaves au moment où un homme haletant et ruisselant se jette en chancelant hors de l'eau du bain.*)

(*Un bruit confus de voix s'ensuit. Les eunuques accourent la lance au poin. L'un d'eux s'apprête, impassible, à tuer. MARDION glisse d'une façon insidieuse le papyrus dans la main de CLÉOPÂTRE.*)

CLÉOPÂTRE (*commande impérieusement*)

Non! amenez cet homme là devant moi!

(*Les eunuques jettant MEIAMOUN aux pieds de la Reine; Il ne montre nulle crainte devant elle.*)

CLÉOPÂTRE

Ton nom? Quel est il? N'est-tu de Rome  
quelqu'assassin gagé? Dis, réponds.  
Réponds-moi!

(MEIAMOUN *garde le silence*)

CLÉOPÂTRE

La mort certaine t'attend. Par les Dieux des  
Enfers, j'admire ton audace.

(*Avec colère montante*)

Pour quel dessein approchas-tu si près de moi?  
Viens-tu te rendre? Infâme, parle, ou  
meurs.

MEIAMOUN (*as if strangling at first*)  
I love you.

CLEOPATRA (*starts — looks at the papyrus*)  
Those words!

MEIAMOUN  
May my soul be found light in the balance of  
eternity, if ever I hoped to follow that  
arrow — the whirlpool of fate seized and  
cast me before you—you believe me—my  
Queen.  
(*covers his face with his hands*)

CLEOPATRA  
Now I know you; like a complaining shade  
have you traced my steps.

MEIAMOUN  
Where you dwell there can be no shade, only  
a radiance engulfing all in blinding light,  
my Queen of Queens. As if one loved a  
star far-furled in the limitless spaces. For  
months, in secret, have I fed on its  
mysterious sweetness until my senses  
swoon through sheer surfeit of ecstasy.  
Each night my star comes forth to lure me  
in its heaven.

CLEOPATRA  
Madman!

MEIAMOUN  
I was — until today — when I beheld you in all  
your enchantment. I gave my oath—even  
as I am yours, so should you be mine —  
though but for a night — a single hour —  
a few pulse beats out of all time, I swore it.  
All that I am, or hope to be, lies confessed,  
quivering before you. Be merciful, O my  
Queen.

CLEOPATRA (*snarling*)  
Ah, so you *can* cringe. What mercy dare you  
ask?

MEIAMOUN (*se lève avec dignité*)  
Je t'aime.

CLÉOPÂTRE  
Ces mots!

MEIAMOUN  
Que les dieux me détruisent si j'eus jamais  
l'espérance folle de te regarde ainsi dans les  
yeux. La main du destin même me jette  
à tes pieds, que je baise, enfin.  
(*Il se couvre le visage des mains*)  
CLÉOPÂTRE (*saisissant les mains de MEIAMOUN*  
*lui découvre le visage qu'elle fixe des yeux.*)

Ah! Depuis longtemps je te vois errer comme  
une ombre pâle.

MEIAMOUN  
Oh, souveraine étoile, qui m'inondes de clarté,  
tu m'apparais, enfin, O Reine, j'ai con-  
templé l'étoile dans les lointains espaces,  
pendant des siècles j'ai chéri la splendeur  
rayonnante de son image dans mon coeur  
enivré de son rêve d'extase.  
Et maintenant l'étoile descend de son ciel.

CLÉOPÂTRE  
Chimère!

MEIAMOUN  
Chimère jusqu'à ce jour où je te vis dans tout  
l'attrait de tes charmes. Je me jurai  
puisque je t'aimais que tu m'aimerais,  
même pour une nuit, pour un moment, un  
seul instant de l'éternité.

Je le jure!  
Ma vie entière est à toi, mon âme, tout mon  
être. Ah! prends pitié de moi, clémentine  
Reine!

CLÉOPÂTRE  
Now, c'est la mort certaine, la mort t'attend.



MEIAMOUN

A swift sure death. We have breathed the same air — now I can die.

CLEOPATRA

But if your Queen should *give* you life?

MEIAMOUN

What should I do with life — now?

CLEOPATRA

Then merciful I'll be — You shall die.

MEIAMOUN (*indicating the Eunuchs*)

Bid them strike deep, I implore, and at my heart's heart, that I may prove — —

CLEOPATRA (*interrupting*)

Not yet. A mood for miracles is upon me. What if your madman's evanescent dream should be transmuted into reality? What if all the glories, the lightnings I am capable of should engulf you?

MEIAMOUN

Cease to torture me, O my Queen. What is your will of me?

CLEOPATRA (*coming near to him*)

To raise you to the heights of your "star" for a night! (*her tone changing to baleful triumph*) Then when the hour comes plunge you back into nothingness.

MARDION (*who has been listening to this last in the greatest agitation, screams*)

Let it strike at once, Meiamoun. Take his life now, Queen!

CLEOPATRA

Nay — I will not *take* his life. I will *buy* it. My coin — the ensilvered hours of one night — a lifetime in a night alone with me. Ah!

MARDION (*rushing toward MEIAMOUN*)

MEIAMOUN

La mort certaine, — Je t'ai baisé les pieds. Vienne la mort!

CLÉOPÂTRE

Et si je te donnais la vie?

MEIAMOUN

Que ferais-je d'elle? Non.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Vienne donc cette mort, que tu demandes!

MEIAMOUN

Qu'on me frappe, je t'implore, vite et fort, dans le fond de mon coeur.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Attends. D'être clémente j'ai le caprice. Que dirais-tu, si de ton rêve d'or je faisais une réalité, soudain, si tous les éclairs, les splendeurs dont je suis Reine t'inondaient?

MEIAMOUN

Tu me mets à la torture. Que veux-tu de moi?

CLÉOPÂTRE

Je pourrais te conduire du néant aux étoiles, et puis quand l'heure sonne dans l'abîme te replonger.

MARDION (*qui a écoutée avec agitation croissante, s'écrie.*)

Meiamoun, n'écoute pas! Sa vie, prenez-la!

CLÉOPÂTRE

Non, je ne la prendrai pas, je l'achète, mon or une nuit d'amour et de merveille, une nuit entière auprès de Cléopâtre! Suffira-t-elle?

MARDION (*s'élançant vers MEIAMOUN*)

Make no bargain with her. The coin she'd pay you in is tainted with much usage. (*she gives him a little dagger*) Your life, Meïamoun, is yours now, yours alone! Put it beyond her reach — e'er she forever be foul it.

(CLEOPATRA *claps her hands three times, points to MARDION. The Eunuchs seize her*)

CLEOPATRA (*strides up to her in a white fury*).

This man — and you — you — you (*she ends speechless.*)

MARDION (*glorified*)

Long have my thoughts dwelt with him—even as his with you.

CLEOPATRA (*sweeping past her*)

What is she to you?

MEÏAMOUN

I know her not.

CLEOPATRA

How am I to believe?

MARDION

He is beloved by many — Meïamoun — whom but to see is to burn for.

CLEOPATRA

So — you are beloved by many?

MEÏAMOUN

I know naught of them.

MARDION

Truth he speaks. No maiden benumbed by the icy shadow of her mother hath been more shy than he of us.

Ah! ne l'écoute pas! Cet or dont elle t'achète est infâme. (MARDION *lui donne un poignard.*) Ta vie est à toi, à toi seul, Meïamoun. Mets la sans hésiter a l'abri de son pouvoir.

(CLÉOPÂTRE *frappe trois fois des mains, indique MARDION que les Eunuches saisissent.*)

CLÉOPÂTRE (*en une furie blanche*)  
Cet homme et toi, toi—toi—toi!

MARDION (*exaltée*)

Depuis longtemps je l'aime — Comme il vous aime.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Que veut-elle dire?

MEÏAMOUN

Je ne saurais.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Que faut-il supposer?

MARDION

Il est aimé de toutes celles que le voient, et qu'il ne voit pas.

CLÉOPÂTRE (*se rapprochant de MEÏAMOUN*)

Ah! le bien-aimé des femmes —

MEÏAMOUN

Je l'ignore.

MARDION

Il dit vrai. L'insensible Hippolyte de Thésée, fut moins glacial, moins chaste que ne l'est Meïamoun.

CLEOPATRA (*with the voice of the serpent*)

Meiamoun, the much beloved! Meiamoun, the chaste! What is your desire? To remain insensible as the snows to us? (*swaying him with a thousand currents*). I'll not sway you to decision — 'tis in your own hand. Do you *take* your life, or sell it to *me* — for a night?

MARDION

Go now, Meiamoun. My love of life, go now — unsullied, unassailed by her — to better things!

MEIAMOUN

To better things! (*raises the dagger as if to plunge it into his heart — flings it from him with a cry*) I cannot. One night, one hour; one heart beat of eternity with you, my Queen. Let the abyss yawn wide as it will, it must wait your whim ere it engulf me.

CLEOPATRA (*reaching him her hand — he devours it with kisses*)

Be it so.

MARDION

So it shall never be — while I live! (*she breaks from the Eunuchs, makes a rush for the dagger and kills herself falling at MEIAMOUN'S feet. The sun sets — the afterglow suffuses the sky with sensational colors of violet, orange and turquoise. The water in the curious light shines like quicksilver. All the objects along the river's far bank are brought out in a sharp black relief against the crepuscular glow.*)

CLEOPATRA (*pointing to MARDION*)

More food for crocodiles. Throw her to them. (*The Eunuchs remove Mardion's body*) (*Cleopatra looks down at MEIAMOUN*) What, still at my feet? Stand — face to face with your Queen. For tonight you are equal of a god. Give me your arm.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Meiamoun, le bien-aimé! Meiamoun, le chaste! Quel est ton désir? Ton sort est dans tes mains. Je te donne la vie. T'est-elle chère, plus chère que l'amour et que moi?

MARDION

Ah, va! Meiamoun, ne reste pas! Va, va, sans tache, vers la vie plus pure et plus belle — plus pure et plus belle.

MEIAMOUN (*Il lève le poignard comme pour le plonger dans son coeur — il le jette avec un cri sourd.*)

Ah, Reine, pitié — une nuit — une heure avec toi, ma Reine!

(CLÉOPÂTRE *lui tend la main qu'il dévore de baisers*)

MARDION

Ce ne sera jamais moi vivante! (*Elle s'élançe des mains des Eunuches, saisit le poignard, le plonge dans son sein et tombe aux pieds de MEIAMOUN*)

(*Le soleil se couche. La lueur crépusculaire produit dans les cieux des reflets violets, oranges et turquoise. L'eau par cette étrange lumière a l'éclat mat d'une glace vue du côté du tain. A la faveur de cette clarté tous les accidents de la rive lointaine de fleuve se découpent en traits fermés et noirs contre l'horizon.*)

CLÉOPÂTRE (*indiquant MARDION*)

Que ceci soit jeté aux eaux du Nil. (*Les Eunuches emportent le cadavre de MARDION*)

CLÉOPÂTRE

Pas à mes pieds. Non!

(*Puts her hand on his bare arm — half swooning as she leans against him*). I desire — I desire to return to the palace — (CLEOPATRA with MEIAMOUN half supporting her—goes up the terrace toward the palace. The attendants, eunuchs, etc., form a cortège which follows them chanting)

O living Queen of the regions above, and below!  
Cleopatra! Sister of Ptolemy proclaimed  
Goddess Evergetes. Eye of Light! chosen  
of the world! Cleopatra! Cleopatra!

(CLEOPATRA enters the Cangia. MEIAMOUN follows and places himself at her feet. The Cangia slowly begins to glide.)

CLEOPATRA (*looking down on him*)

Meiamoun!

MEIAMOUN (*in adoration*)

Cleopatra!

CLEOPATRA (*pointing to the deepening twilight*)

See, our night!

MEIAMOUN

Now reigns supreme, my only star

CLEOPATRA

Gift of all the gods!

END OF ACT I.

(MEIAMOUN se lève)

Lève-toi jusqu'à moi. Pour ce soir je fais de toi l'égal d'un dieu.

(*presque défaillante*)

Donne ta main pour rentrer au Palais avec moi —viens. (*Au son de la fanfare les assistants, les Eunuques etc., s'assemblent pour préparer la scène dernière. Le cortège se forme, et monte lentement les marches de la terrasse vers le Palais*)

Femme de Ptolemée, nommée déesse Evergète, et souveraine d'en bas et d'en haut! Souveraine, choisie du monde! Cléopâtre, Cléopâtre! Souveraine, choisie du monde!

(CLÉOPÂTRE entre dans la Cange. MEIAMOUN la fait et s'assied à ses pieds, — Quelques suivants et suivantes entrent aussi, d'autres restent debout sur les marches pendant que la Cange commence à glisser doucement sur l'eau.)

CLÉOPÂTRE (*se penchant vers lui*)

Meiamoun!

MEIAMOUN (*extasie*)

Cléopâtre!

CLÉOPÂTRE (*montrant le crépuscule qui s'assombrit*)

C'est notre nuit!

MEIAMOUN

Règne sur elle, sublime Etoile!

CLÉOPÂTRE

Don de tous les dieux!

RIDEAU

## ACT II

*The action transpires just before sunrise on the Terraces of CLEOPATRA'S Palace.*

*Short thick columns variegated with hieroglyphics sustain the first tier of the terraces. Between them at intervals crouches a colossal sphynx of basalt, crowned with the "pschent."*

*Above them rise the columns of the second tier crowned with female heads; bull-headed idols on thrones of stone, squat impassive between them.*

*The third tier seems to reach the sky. From it, great elephants of bronze lift their trunks in trumpeting attitude. Carved gates open from the second and third tiers into the Palace.*

*Stairways of polished porphyry connect the whole. "A wilderness of building — and self withdrawn into a wondrous depth."*

*On the second tier is a throne with golden griffens on either side. Ranged around it are the banquet tables for Cleopatra's guests. Tripods of brass and giant candelabra shed their disheveled light through the vapors of incense. Giant flowers bloom in vases and strew the steps, at the bottom of which play perfumed fountains. The roof is the star-freighted Egyptian night, made luminous by the mystic oriental moon.*

*The curtain rises as the slaves prepare the banquet. The guests stream out, some from the gates of the second terrace and some from the gardens. All are magnificent — the women seduction incarnate — the men boundlessly licentious.*

*A GUEST (catching a slave girl as she passes)*

*Here is a dainty morsel for you not before espied.*

*A HUNGRY GUEST*

*I care not. The pangs of hunger dull all others. Were we not bidden to a feast?*

## ACTE DEUXIEME

*L'action se passe avant l'aube, sur les terrasses du Palais d'Été de Cléopâtre.*

*Des colonnes courtes, trapues, bigarrées d'hieroglyphes, soutiennent de leurs chapiteaux le premier étage des terrasses. Entre chaque pilier s'allonge un sphinx colossal de bésalte, coiffé du pschent.*

*Au second étage les chapiteaux des colonnes sont formés par des têtes de femme. Des idoles impassibles à tête de taureau sont assis entre les colonnes.*

*Un troisième étage paraît se dresser jusqu'aux cieux. Des éléphants de bronze à trompe levée le couronnent.*

*Au second et au troisième étage des grilles ciselées donnent entrée au palais.*

*Des escaliers de porphyre tiennent entre elles ces grandes masses d'architecture.*

*Au second étage se trouve un trône soutenu de griffons d'or. Les tables du festin sont disposées autour de le trône.*

*Des trépiéds d'airain et des candélabres gigantesques secouent leur lumière échevelée à travers un brouillard d'encens.*

*D'énormes fleurs s'épanouissent dans les vases, où sont répandues sur les marches des escaliers, au bas des quels coulent des fontaines d'eau de senteur.*

*Formant coupole, le ciel étoilé, s'ouvre comme un gouffre bleu éclairé par la mystique lune de l'Orient.*

*Au lever du rideau les esclaves préparent le festin. Les convives arrivent les uns par les grilles de la seconde terrasse, les autres par le jardin. Tous sont superbes. Les femmes sont la séduction même. Les hommes d'une licence sans borne.*

*PREMIER CONVIVE (saisissant une esclave qui passe.)*

*Où vas-tu en telle hâte, belle enfante?*

*DEUXIEME CONVIVE*

*Qu'importe! N'est-il pas l'heure du festin?*

## A FEMALE GUEST

I would see this Meïamoun. Never before had any man — not even Antony — the power to cause her to forget the banquet hour.

## IRAS

Queen Cleopatra sends greeting. She robes herself even now for the repast.

## A HUNGRY GUEST

The gods be thanked.

## IRAS

She bids you make ready to drink her health and that of Meïamoun.

## A HUNGRY GUEST

Even to this outcast dog — so that we but drink (*goblets of gold are passed and filled with wine — the guests hold them poised as*

A EUNUCH (*announces*)

They are here. (CLEOPATRA and MEÏAMOUN appear at the top of the terrace)

## CHORUS

Cleopatra — Cleopatra — Eye of Light! May you dwell on us forever!

## CLEOPATRA

Drink yet again — and this time to Meïamoun.

## THE GUESTS

To Meïamoun — Meïamoun chosen of the Sun!

## CLEOPATRA

Be happy, all — as I am this night.

(*She descends the stairways leaning upon the arm of MEÏAMOUN. The air is shattered with the shouts of guests, the croakings and tumblings of dwarfs — the blare of music. CLEOPATRA seats herself on the throne. MEÏAMOUN makes as if to lie at her feet.*)

## CLEOPATRA

Nay, sit beside me.

## UNE INVITÉE

Je veux voir ce Meïamoun, parmi les hommes le premier qui eut jamais le don de faire oublier un festin à Cléopâtre.

IRAS (*entre de la terrasse*)

Cléopâtre approche. Royale soeur d'Aphrodite et de Hathor.

## DEUXIÈME CONVIVE

Grands dieux merci!

## IRAS

Voulez-vous boire à sa santé et celle de Meïamoun.

## DEUXIÈME CONVIVE

Buvons même à ce chien et surtout, buvons! (*On fait circuler des coupes d'or remplies de vin parmi les convives qui les tiennent à hauteur de bras.*)

## L'EUNUQUE

Ils approchent. (MEÏAMOUN et CLÉOPÂTRE apparaissent sur la seconde terrasse)

## CHOEUR

Cléopâtre, Cléopâtre, Oeil du monde, que ton règne soit éternel!

## CLÉOPÂTRE

Buvez encore, buvez à Meïamoun.

## CHOEUR

Meïamoun, Meïamoun, choisi du Soleil!

CLÉOPÂTRE (*elle descend appuyée au bras de MEÏAMOUN*)

Soyez heureux! heureux comme moi!

(*L'air retentit aux acclamations des convives et aux cris des nains bossus. CLÉOPÂTRE s'assied sur le trône. MEÏAMOUN se prépare à s'étendre à ses pieds.*)

## CLÉOPÂTRE

Non, viens auprès de moi.

MEIAMOUN (*pointing to the throne*)

There?

CLEOPATRA

Here — level with my heart.

MEIAMOUN

Where your heart — is mine entwined — henceforth and forever on.

CLEOPATRA

Meïamoun, Meïamoun — do not look at me more — still do I swoon 'neath your gaze.

MEIAMOUN

How in this world shall I envisage aught again — save you — my Star of Fate?

CLEOPATRA

But if I command! (*she claps her hands*). Let the maidens from Greece dance for us. (*Viands are passed on great carved golden trenchers and the wine poured from jewel-encrusted long snouted vessels. The guests fall to greedily. A boar roasted entire is carried on — cut into, it emits a flock of living birds. (CLEOPATRA is hungry — she eats voraciously at first — finally notices that MEIAMOUN has refused every dish)*)

CLEOPATRA

Is there naught here will satisfy — does my repast not please you?

MEIAMOUN

Ne'er has man feasted as I this night, yet hungered as I still do.

CLEOPATRA (*purposely misunderstanding*)

Then here be Phenicopters' tongues (MEIAMOUN *waves them off*)

MEIAMOUN

They'll not appease the vultures that yet raven me (*clutching his heart*)

MEIAMOUN (*indiquant le trône*)

La!

CLÉOPÂTRE

Oui, tout près de mon coeur.

MEIAMOUN

Mon coeur bat ou bat le tien.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Meïamoun, je me sens mourir sous ton regard ardent et doux.

MEIAMOUN

Au monde il n'est plus rien, mes yeux me cherchent ici bas que toi—toi, O Reine de mon destin.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Mais, si je commande? Que les filles de Grèce dansent. (*De riches mets sur des plateaux en or ciselé parmi les convives attablés. On verse le vin de grandes amphores incrustées de pierreries. On apporte un sanglier rôti entier, dont sort, quand on le coupe une volée d'oiseaux vivants. CLÉOPÂTRE mange, mais elle s'aperçoit que MEIAMOUN refuse de tous les plats.*)

CLÉOPÂTRE

N'est-il ici nulle chose qui te plaise ou tente?

MEIAMOUN

Après un tel festin nul autre que moi, n'aurait voulu d'avantage.

CLÉOPÂTRE (*indiquant un plat*)

Des langues de Phénicoptères?

MEIAMOUN

Non, rien ne calmera les vautours qui me rongent.

## CLEOPATRA

Mayhap this dish of peacock's brains stewed  
in rare wine will allay their pangs.

## MEIAMOUN

As naught were all the brains of peacocks that  
e'er strutted.

## CLEOPATRA

What then will glut this monstrous appetite —  
Meïamoun the insatiable?

## MEIAMOUN

Let me devour that soul-shattering face, which  
men will die for down the ages.

CLEOPATRA (*leaning across MEIAMOUN her face  
upturned to him*)

MEIAMOUN (*holding her yearningly*)

Like white of flames do you creep athwart my  
heart. This jewel crusted hour as all the  
others your bounty has made mine, is  
packed with more than all eternity holds  
for most men. O wondrous star set in my  
lifetime of a night!

## CLEOPATRA

Fuller still I'll pack it. My desert maidens  
shall weave their dances of madness for  
you. Come forth! Held inviolate they —  
for the jaded kings of earth. Tonight  
they shall be for the quick. Come forth  
my maidens — Dance! — Dance for  
Meïamoun as you ne'er have danced for  
any Emperor!

(*The band of desert maidens weave out sinuously  
from all directions. Incited by the dance,  
the guests grow more licentious. Some lie  
entwined as they watch. Others snatch  
at the dancing girls who, too exhausted to  
resist, are seized bodily and carried scream-  
ing and laughing to hidden spots of the gar-  
dens*).

MEIAMOUN'S head is pillowed against CLEO-  
PATRA'S heart.

(*A grotesque of hunchbacked dwarfs lash the  
tired girls on with garlands of flowers,  
tumbling and shouting among them*).

## CLÉOPÂTRE

Et ces cervelles de paon, ne pourraient-elles  
apaiser ta faim?

## MEIAMOUN

Non, rien n'apaisera ma faim sans limite.

## CLÉOPÂTRE

Que te faut-il alors, mon Meïamoun, Meïamoun  
l'insatiable?

## MEIAMOUN

Ah, laisse, laisse que je dévore de baisers ton  
visage.

(*CLÉOPÂTRE se laissant tomber sur la poitrine  
de MEIAMOUN, lève vers lui son visage*)

(*MEIAMOUN (avec un élan de passion et de ten-  
dresse)*)

Ce visage que les hommes dans les siècles loin-  
tains mourront d'aimer, et qui change une  
heure en une éternité entière. Ah, laisse  
ma pauvre âme s'égarer dans tes yeux!

## CLÉOPÂTRE

Cette heure divine, je veux remplir de toute  
extase, de tout plaisir. (*Une bande de  
filles du désert se glisse sinuusement de tous  
côtés sur la scène*) La danse! Dansez,  
mes filles, filles du désert, votre danse  
folle pour Meïamoun! (*Pendant que la  
danse avance avec frénésie croissant, les  
convives s'emparent de filles trop épuisées  
pour se débattre, et les emportant criant et  
riant aux allées solitaires et cachées du  
jardin. Une grotesque bande de nains se  
ruant en criant parmi celles qui continuent  
à danser fouettent les filles épuisées avec de  
longues guirlandes de fleurs. Enfin tous  
quittent la scène sauf CLÉOPÂTRE et MEIA-  
MOUN*).

(*La tête de MEIAMOUN est penchée sur l'épaule de  
CLÉOPÂTRE*)



CLEOPATRA

Meïamoun, how did you find my desert girls?

MEÏAMOUN

Though I looked, I saw them not.

CLEOPATRA

Meïamoun, Meïamoun, where were you schooled in love?

MEÏAMOUN

I have but counted o'er and o'er the sum of your enchantments.

CLEOPATRA

Dullards are all compared with you — Meïamoun — my gift of the waters. Tell me yet once again.

MEÏAMOUN

What can I tell you more that shall not weary you?

CLEOPATRA

Ne'er do I tire of those three magic words, which flung wide the portals of my heart.

MEÏAMOUN

I love you — I love you. How shall I tell you how! I love you simply as the flowers turn to the sun — yet mysteriously as the ether's unpierced vastness. I love you gently as a father lifts his new born girl-child, yet wildly as a lost soul staggering down to hell's infernal. I love you as men cling to life. Star aflaming — enshrined in my soul's soul. And when strange planes I tread—if gods be just — I still shall love you more.

CLEOPATRA (*her hand on his mouth*)

Nay — tell me no more — here — where greedy ears may steal the honey of your words. In my garden's heart hides a white temple — there can we again be alone.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Meïamoun, ma danse te plait-elle?

MEÏAMOUN

Je n'ai vu que toi.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Meïamoun, Meïamoun, Roi de l'amour vainqueur!

MEÏAMOUN

Et je revais sur ton coeur de neige et de flamme.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Meïamoun, fils du Nil sacré, redis-les moi, ces mots.

MEÏAMOUN

Quels mots veux-tu que je te dise, je t'ai tout dit.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Redis ces mots, si simples et tendres qui pour jamais charmèrent tout mon coeur.

MEÏAMOUN

Je t'aime, je t'aime! Quels mots te le diront? Je t'aime comme aiment les fleurs au doux printemps; je t'aime avec tout le mystère des firmaments. Je t'aime comme une mère berce son enfant. Je t'aime comme aiment les âmes dans les enfers, et les tourments. Je t'aime, je t'aime! Quels mots te le diront? Je t'aime plus que l'espérance, Cléopâtre, enchâssée dans mon âme; et dans la mort je t'aimerais, déesse, plus que jamais!

CLÉOPÂTRE

Viens avec moi, au jardin solitaire, là, nous nous trouverons dans le petit temple blanc.

MEÏAMOUN (*who has started with her — his arms around her — suddenly seems to stiffen as with an icy chill — his arms drop from her as he cries*)

We cannot reach it now!

CLEOPATRA

Why not? 'Tis but a few swift steps.

MEÏAMOUN

Yet may I not take them (*pointing to a faint glow — the first premonition of day*) See! The first outriders of the great White Queen — Here must I await them.

CLEOPATRA (*clapping her hands*)

Draw all the canopies. We'll not admit them.

MEÏAMOUN

Much may you do, yet the day must follow the night.

CLEOPATRA (*in a fury of impotence*)

It will not! It shall not! I'll shut it out — for a whole month shall darkness reign.

MEÏAMOUN (*putting his arms around her*)

Yet I do love her more for this than all her other moods of wonder, Cleopatra — my beautiful —

CLEOPATRA (*pushing him from her*)

Nay, you do not love me, else the very light of day would you deny for me.

MEÏAMOUN

For you — have I not foresworn the light that shall guide my soul to peace? Greater love can no man show.

CLEOPATRA

Meïamoun, Meïamoun, the night is still yours — yours but to desire!

MEÏAMOUN (*proudly refusing the bait of his life*)

Naught have you left me to desire.

MEÏAMOUN (*qui est en train de suivre CLÉOPÂTRE, l'entourant de ses bras, s'arrête, soudain, comme frappé d'un fusson mortel. Il laisse retomber ses bras à ses côtés.*)

Nous n'y parviendrons pas.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Pourquoi? Nous le voyons d'ici.

MEÏAMOUN

Il est trop tard. (*Il indique dans les cieux une lueur incertaine, premier pressentiment du jour.*)

Vois-tu làbas l'aube naissante; mon sort est décidé.

CLÉOPÂTRE (*frappant des mains pour appeler les esclaves*)

N'admettez pas le jour; Qu'on l'éteigne!

MEÏAMOUN

Malgré ta puissance, le jour doit suivre la nuit.

CLÉOPÂTRE (*avec fureur impuissante*)

Il faut—je veux, j'ordonne que la nuit continue tout un long mois!

MEÏAMOUN (*l'entourant de ses bras*)

Ah, pour ces mots je t'aime plus encore que pour tous tes autres appas sublimes, ma Cléopâtre!

CLÉOPÂTRE (*le repoussant doucement*)

Tu ne m'aimes pas, si tu m'aimes, pour moi tu nierais le jour, mon Meïamoun.

MEÏAMOUN

Ah, n'ai-je pas renoncé pour toi à la vie, à la lumière. Quel amour veux-tu plus grand?

CLÉOPÂTRE

Meïamoun, Meïamoun. La nuit est jeune encore. Elle est à toi!

MEÏAMOUN

Tous mes désirs sont satisfaits.

CLEOPATRA

Meiamoun — yet there is time — yours —  
any gift — to ask.

MEIAMOUN

But one — when my soul first wings faltering  
to the far countries — will you hold its  
earthly shell to your heart, as now you do?

CLEOPATRA

I will, Meiamoun.

MEIAMOUN

And sometimes in the dark still hours of night,  
when you start suddenly awake, will you  
think of me?

CLEOPATRA

Too much, I fear, shall my thoughts be of you.  
(*sees the rosy light of dawn, utters a piercing cry*)  
The dawn!

(*The distiller of poisons enters, stepping as if to  
a dirge. His aspect is chillingly sinister.  
He holds high a horn vase — so powerful is  
the poison it contains — a bluish vapor es-  
capes it. He stalks up to MEIAMOUN and  
presents him with it*)

MEIAMOUN

Gods, I salute you. Through other ethers shall  
you still blaze for me, my star! Farewell!  
(*he raises the vase to his lips*)

CLEOPATRA (*cries out — drawing his arm down*)

Nay, live! Live! — but to love me — here —  
I desire it — I —

MEIAMOUN (*seems to weaken*)

My Queen of Stars, I —

IRAS (*warningly*)

'Tis Antony's horn.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Meiamoun, tout est à toi, tu n'as qu'à demander.

MEIAMOUN

Alors, quand mon âme fuira vers les régions  
funestes tiendras-tu mon coeur perdu sur  
ton coeur, comme à present?

CLÉOPÂTRE

Oh, oui, Meiamoun.

MEIAMOUN

Et dans les heures de la nuit penseras-tu parfois  
à moi?

CLÉOPÂTRE

Où, Meiamoun, je le jure. (*En tournant la tête  
CLÉOPÂTRE aperçoit la clarté de l'aube.*)

L'aurore! (*Un esclave entre portant à hauteur  
de bras un vase de corne contenant un poison  
si violent qu'une vapeur bleuâtre s'en élève.  
Il s'avance vers MEIAMOUN auquel il  
présente la coupe*)

MEIAMOUN (*extasie*)

Dieux, je vous salue! En d'autres sphères tu  
brilleras pour moi, étoile!  
(*Il lève la coupe*) Adieu!

CLÉOPÂTRE

Non, non, vis pour moi! Je te le commande!

MEIAMOUN

Ah, Cléopâtre!

IRAS (*accourant*)

C'est Marc Antoine!

(CLEOPATRA loosens her grasp on MEÏAMOUN'S arm — her own drops dejectedly to her side)

MEÏAMOUN

'Tis the siren call of Destiny — inescapable.  
Farewell, O my wondrous one!

CLEOPATRA

Farewell. Meïamoun unlike all others.

(He drains the poison and falls at her feet as if shot, as four heralds at arms enter on horseback — officers of Antony.)

(As CLEOPATRA claps her hands the Eunuchs enter and cover MEÏAMOUN'S body with silken cloths.)

ANTONY'S CHIEF OFFICER

Greeting from Antony — O Queen.

CLEOPATRA (*imperiously*)

Ride back! Tell him I await him eagerly. (*Her voice falters. Antony's men exit.*)

CLEOPATRA (*holding MEÏAMOUN to her heart— her voice breaking*)

Meïamoun, Meïamoun, see, I keep my promise. I hold you close. All-precious gift of the gods. Where are you now? Where wings that fire-purged soul? Almost — I too — would soar there with you alone — Meïamoun — I shall think of you — in the cool of moonlight nights, as in sterile stretching days — oft shall I be with you. You were right — even our night of dreams has vanished. Shattered and scattered where? Into Emptiness! No more — no more — my gift of the waters.

ANTONY (*calls ringingly from the Palace*)  
Cleopatra!

MEÏAMOUN

C'est l'appel inevitable de la destinée. Adieu, étoile d'amour!

CLÉOPÂTRE

Adieu, O Meïamoun. Adieu, mon rêve!

(MEÏAMOUN vide la coupe et tombe comme frappé de la foudre aux pieds de CLÉOPÂTRE)

(CLÉOPÂTRE frappe des mains. Les Eunuchs entrent et posent sur le cadavre de MEÏAMOUN un voile de soie. Entrent quatre hérauts d'armes, officiers de Marc Antoine)

PREMIER OFFICIER DE MARC ANTOINE

Marc Antoine vous salue, O Reine.

CLÉOPÂTRE

Allez, dites-lui qu'ici je l'attends. (*Aussitôt que les hérauts de MARC ANTOINE sont partis, CLÉOPÂTRE qui s'est laissée choir sur un banc de pierre se lève et s'avance lentement vers le cadavre de MEÏAMOUN. Durant les arpèges des harpes elle le découvre et regard avec tendresse.*)

CLÉOPÂTRE (*tenant dans ses bras MEÏAMOUN. le coeur et la voix brisés*)

Je tiens ma promesse, je te presse sur mon coeur. Don précieux de nos Dieux, où donc as-tu fui? Ame si pure et si fière, pour toujours je veux vers toi m'envoler. O Meïamoun, de nos rêves la nuit même n'a laissé qu'un vide immense. Je tiens ma promesse, je te presse sur mon coeur. Oh, réponds-moi, mon Meïamoun. Hélas! Don précieux de nos Dieux, toi que seul j'aimais! (*Elle s'agenouille auprès de lui et l'embrasse avec tendresse.*)

MARC ANTOINE (*au dehors*)

Cléopâtre!

CLEOPATRA

Yes, my Antony — I come.

(CLEOPATRA *once more yearningly holds MEIAMOUN to her heart — then resolutely walks toward the terrace steps and ascends them as the priests continue*)

THE PRIESTS

O Nutar, Nutar amtu heret—send us the rain!

(CLEOPATRA *slowly enters the palace.*)  
Thou, who causeth all growth to fulfill desire —  
grant our one prayer.

(*She slowly ascends the terrace.*)

(THE CURTAIN DESCENDS)  
END OF THE OPERA

CLÉOPÂTRE (*se lève*)

Marc Antoine, je viens.

(*Après un moment CLÉOPÂTRE s'achemine vers le palais mais se tourne. Elle revient lentement sur ses pas*)

LES PRÊTRES (*chantent au loin*)

O Nutar, Nutar, amtu heret, donne la pluie!

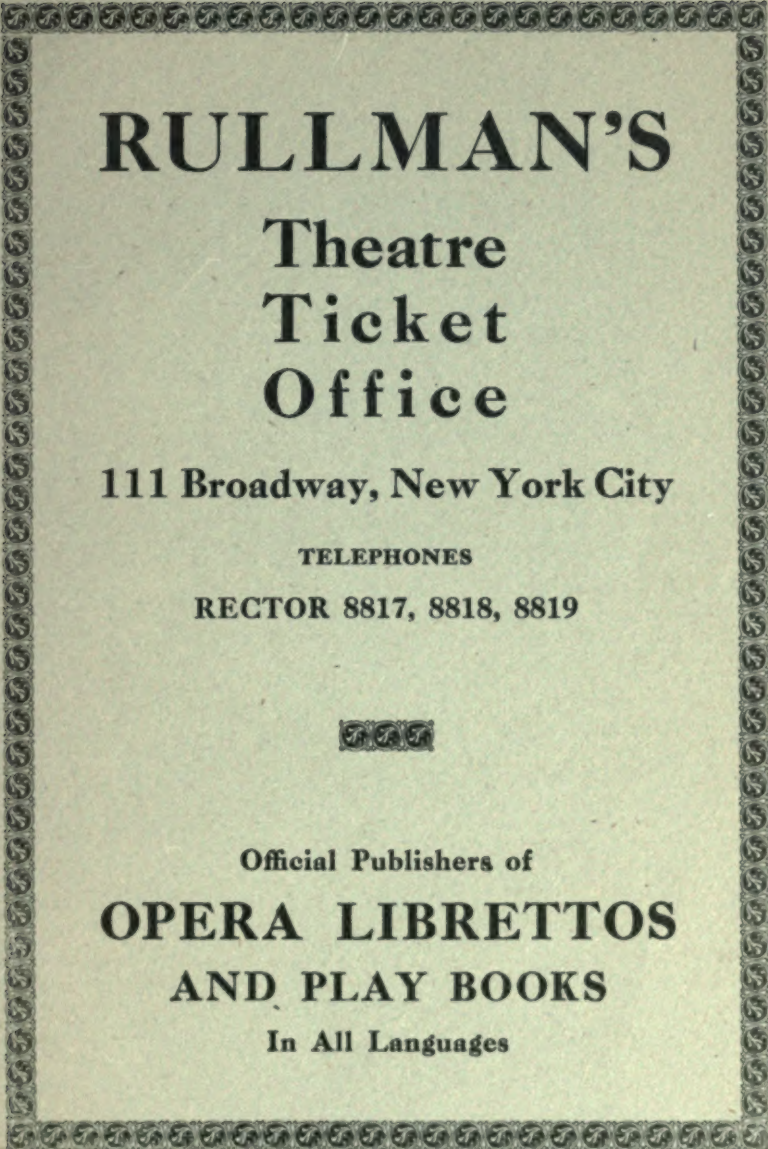
(CLÉOPÂTRE *regarde tristement MEIAMOUN, lui prend la tête entre les mains et baise ses lèvres*)

Toi dont vient tout désir, tout apaisement,  
écoute-nous. (*Elle monte lentement les marches de la terrasse.*)

(RIDEAU)  
FIN DE L'OPÉRA







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